

LET'S EXPLORE

PLAINS of MORRIS COUNTY

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

CONSIDER the merits of the Morris County plains just beyond Great Piece Meadow you're seeking a short holiday trip designed to avoid traffic. The route over moderately-traveled roads is through a historically-stimulating and eye-pleasing area and, in addition, offers some unusual slants on such familiar things as the Boonton Reservoir and the Great Piece Meadow.

Naturally it will take a great deal of twisting and turning to keep away from traffic this week-end. Still, it can be done. The Livingston traffic circle is a good place to start, although the trip can be joined at many spots in West Essex. From the circle, take Beaufort road north to Roseland, where a right turn in Eagle Rock avenue is followed a short distance away by a left turn in Passaic avenue. Now the way is straight ahead to cross Bloomfield avenue and Route 6 on traffic lights.

Just before Route 6 is reached, Caldwell Wright Airport and its many types of planes is a point of interest. Much experimental work is carried on at the field and the extensive overhaul department service planes from all over the nation.

BEYOND Route 6 the trip crosses both of the bridges which give Two Bridges its name at the junction of the Pompton and Passaic rivers. Imbedded in the Passaic River to the left of the concrete bridge are three huge boulders. It is said in Indian legend

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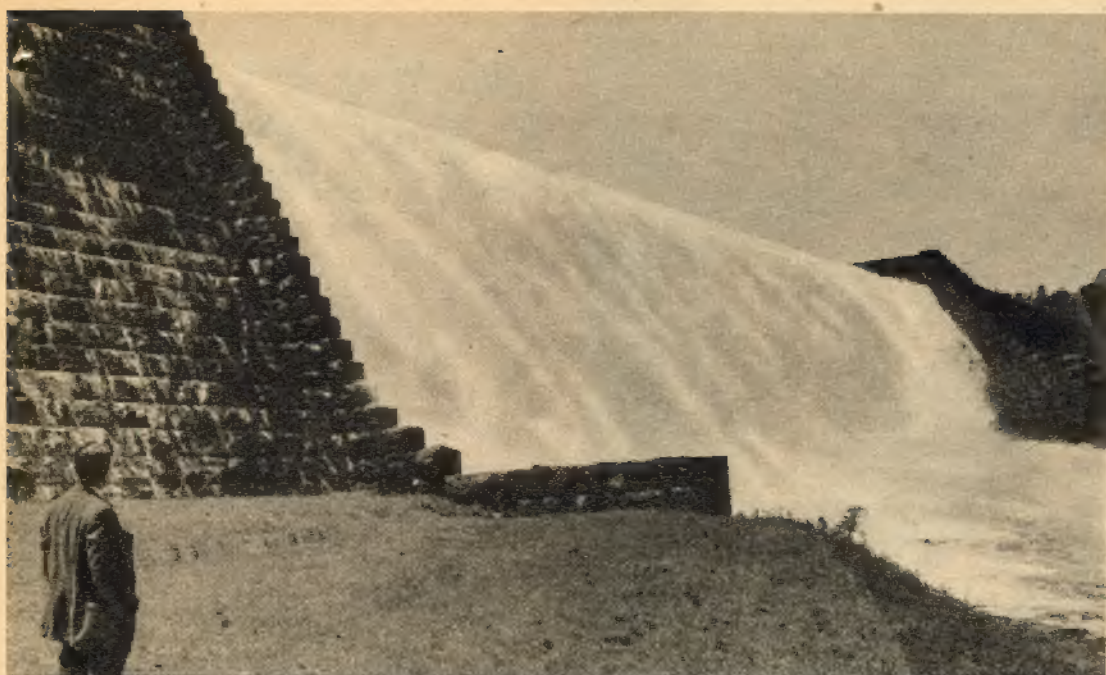
Antique fire alarm at Towaco forms circular frame for one of old Dutch stone houses, which spot roadside along Route 202.



Huge boulders in the Passaic River near Two Bridges were hurled, according to Indian legend, by giants made angry by fishermen.



Twin spans where Passaic (left) and Pompton rivers meet give junction name of Two Bridges crossed on way to Lincoln Park.



Water spilling over dam at Boonton reservoir built by Jersey City water works. Runoff is about 300,000,000 gallons a day.



Now a private residence, Dodd's Tavern in Lincoln Park was an important stop on the Morristown-Pompton road in Colonial days.



One of the landmarks around Pompton Plains is the First Reformed Dutch Church. Front wall is from original church built in 1771.

LET'S EXPLORE--*Morris County Plains*

(Continued from Preceding Page)

that giants on First Mountain became displeased at some fishermen. Hurling the boulders from the mountaintop, the giants destroyed the fishermen and also drove most of the fish from the river, the legend says.

A left turn at the end of the second bridge, followed by a swing into the next road to the left (Fayette avenue) carries the motorist along the gently-flowing Pompton River to Route 202. Here another left turn is made for Lincoln Park. Along 202, first on the right and later on the left, can often be seen the remains of the old Morris Canal.

Dodd's Tavern in Lincoln Park, a low stone house on the left just beyond the school, remains from pre-Revolutionary days when the town was an important stop on the Morris-

town-Pompton road. The house is now a private residence. In the days when it was Dodd's Tavern it made Beaver Town a lively place and much of the conversation had to do with the many beavers who lived in the nearby creek. After the Civil War, when the beavers were gone, Lincoln's name was given to the town.

TURN right in Main street at the corner near Dodd's Tavern, then proceed left in Comly road over the tracks of the Boonton Branch of the D., L. & W. Railroad. This way to Pompton has been used by travelers for two centuries and it's easy to see why the area has always been known as "The Plains." Flat lands surrounding the road are covered by extensive truck gardens. The road forks near Pompton Plains, so keep right to the old

Newark-Pompton turnpike, where a left turn is made to see the handsome old Pompton Plains First Reformed Dutch Church, the outstanding landmark of the Plains.

A tablet mounted on the church's front wall records in brief its changing fortunes—built in 1771, rebuilt in 1814, burned in 1937 and rebuilt in 1938. Fortunately the front wall was undamaged in the 1937 fire and by rebuilding around it the church fathers have retained the 18th Century character of the white brick building.

Beyond the church drive north to Hopper avenue several blocks away, turn left and continue to West End avenue. By swinging left in West End then right in Sunset road, the next street, the traveler can head for a pleasant ride along the foothills of the rugged and wild Waughan Mountain. Sunset road makes a sharp right curve, keeps left at a fork, then clings

close by the mountain all the way to Towaco and another junction with Route 202.

TOWACO has an Indian sound, but actually the name is a corruption of an early Dutch term. Soon after the Dutch found the fertile valley they set up a watch on Hook Mountain (which will be crossed later), overlooking all of the plains. They called the mountain "te Waak Haak" and pronounced it "tay walk hawk," meaning "at the Watch Hook." The passing years have run "tay walk hawk" into Towaco.

From Towaco Route 202 passes land that once was all Dutch. Indeed, all of the plains, including Great Piece Meadows, were once peopled by Dutch settlers. The names on many of the mail boxes along the way indicate descendants still remain. Many of the long low Dutch stone houses are spotted by the roadside.



Looking toward control tower at Caldwell Wright Airport where much experimental work is under way. Many aircraft types can be seen from road.



Route 202 swings upward through oddly-situated Montville, clustered on a hillside where the road curves sharply and rises rapidly. (The settlement grew around a Morris Canal lock). Then, just beyond the overpass of the hosiery factory, turn left then right at the next "T" intersection for an unusual view of the Boonton Reservoir.

THE road winds along the Rockaway River until suddenly looming ahead is the 90-foot-high dam which Jersey City built 50 years ago. On either side of the road are portions of the sewage disposal plant serving communities as far away as Dover on the Rockaway River watershed. Unfortunately thick trees to the right hide most of the great falls plunging over the dam but the dull roar of the cascading water can be heard. Nevertheless, the blue granite face the dam set against the welllandscaped grounds makes a pleasant scene.

Now the way is back home over Hook Mountain and after passing the dam take the first macadam street to the left (Longview avenue) to Beverwyck road where a left turn is made to cross the Passaic River at Peer's Bridge. Keep right beyond the bridge to pass over Hook Mountain, still

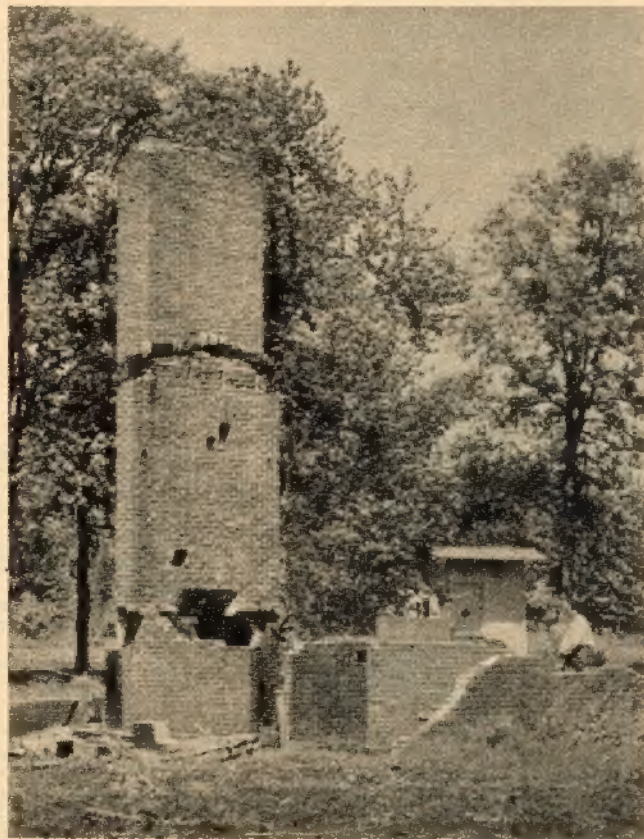
known as Towakhow Mountain on the state's topographic maps in keeping with the early Dutch derivation. The Hook is only 400 feet above Great Piece Meadow but the incredibly flat land along the slowly-moving Passaic River makes the height seem greater.

Far-reaching views are available off the mountain and on clear days the eye can pick up landmarks as far off as the Hudson River. The descent to Horseneck Bridge is especially appealing to any one who has never followed the road.

AT Horseneck Bridge a newly-established skeet field contrasts with the collapsing brick chimneys which remain from an ill-fated attempt to establish a Navy rifle range on the meadows in World War I. Fires and floods kept the range from becoming more than a token reality as the Passaic continued to hold sway over the flat lands.

Directly across Great Piece is the road back. Make a left turn at Great Piece road, the first street beyond the bridge. Continue to Sand road, where a left turn is made to Two Bridges road. In sight to the right is the Route 6 traffic light where the crossing was made earlier in the trip.

Route of this week's tour over moderately-traveled roads is ideal for a short holiday trip.



This brick chimney is reminder of Navy attempt to set up rifle range on Great Piece Meadow in World War I. Flood conditions caused project's abandonment.

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